

Iowa Afterschool Alliance Issue Brief

Afterschool Programs Support Student Learning

This issue brief is the third in a series developed by the Iowa Afterschool Alliance. Each issue brief is designed to educate policymakers about important issues relating to Iowa's afterschool programs in an effort to encourage well-informed policies for those programs. Please note, however, that the views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the organizations employing the Alliance members.

"Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievements. They engage students in service and ensure that youth have access to anti-substance abuse programs. For America's working parents, they provide the confidence that their children are well cared for after the school day ends." — President George Bush



Afterschool Programs Make Academic Sense

Nationwide, afterschool programs have been proven to enhance students' performance in school. Studies show afterschool programs not only improve academic achievement, but they also increase attendance and interest in school and reduce grade retention. By offering a reinforcement and supplement of a school's curriculum, afterschool programs provide not only a solution to the "Three O'Clock Dilemma," the time of day when children are most likely to be involved in risky behavior, but also an enhancement of students' education.

In a national YMCA study, it was shown that 79% of teens in afterschool programs are A or B students. As a contrast, teens not involved in afterschool programs are five times more likely to be D students. They are also three times more likely to skip classes and use marijuana or other drugs than those teens in afterschool programs.

Accountability for Building Stronger Skills

To use public and private dollars most efficiently, Iowa's 21st Century Community Learning Centers participate in a U.S. Department of Education performance reporting system. Reporting student and program data annually, Iowa's afterschool programs know exactly how they help students learn and where they must improve programs. For instance, the most recent data show that the Van Buren Community School District's afterschool programs excel in offering extended library time, tutoring, service learning opportunities, as well as math, science, and reading activities. Based on stated goals and last year's performance, the program discovered it needs to also improve family literacy programs, mentoring, and access to English as a second language activities.

What is the Iowa Afterschool Alliance?

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) is a statewide coalition of networks and interest groups who support, advocate, train, and work to advance afterschool and out-of-school time experiences which are meaningful and beneficial for children, youth, families, and communities. The IAA is a project of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and receives financial support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Statewide Afterschool Network grant and the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust.

Afterschool programs provide time and assistance for youth to master reading skills. This extra time and help has been found to lead to significant increases in reading achievement. In one study, teachers reported that a third of children participating in afterschool programs earned better grades and developed a greater interest in recreational reading. Afterschool programs allow students to practice and develop these important skills in a fun, relaxed environment.

Iowa's Afterschool Programs Looking Forward

When afterschool programs in Iowa can show that they have positive academic results, keep kids safe and out of trouble, and

support working

families, it is crucial that

they are able to secure

funds from partners at

every level to continue

their success. Iowa has

lost eligibility for federal 21st CCLC funds over the last few years.

Previously, funds were

awarded on a

competitive basis. Now,

programs with 40% or

more of the students

receiving free or reduced

lunch receive

preference, and

significantly fewer

programs in Iowa qualify

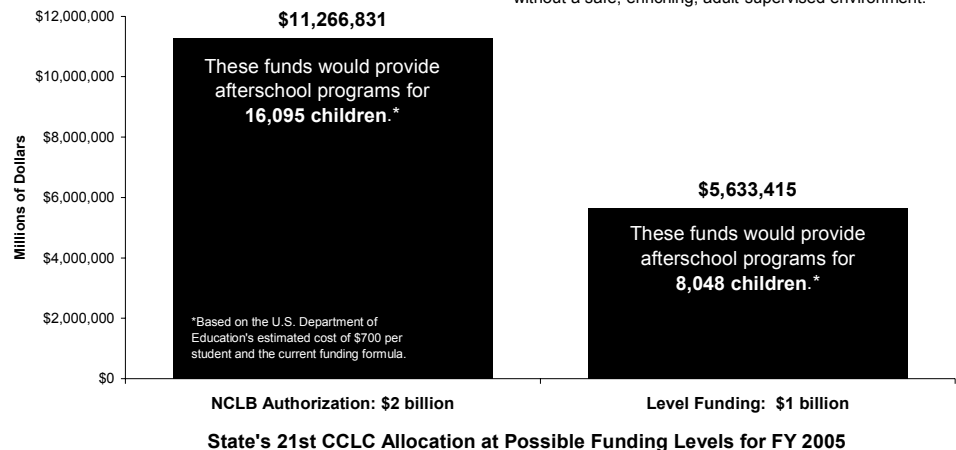
under such criteria.

Supporting Iowa's

afterschool programs to find other funds becomes imperative as the federal 21st CCLC program provides fewer and fewer resources.

Iowa

The gap between the \$2 billion authorized for afterschool programs by the landmark No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the \$1 billion in the President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget proposal means that, if Congress follows the President's lead, 1.4 million children in America will be left behind after school, without a safe, enriching, adult-supervised environment.



Summary

Afterschool programs provide an opportunity for students to improve their academic performance and boost their lifelong interest in reading. Enhancing their education through afterschool programs keeps students from resorting to post-school risky behavior that results from being alone, unsupervised, and bored.

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